

How Do I Become A Mentor?

Mentoring works; it is a strategy that can help youth of all circumstances to achieve. Millions of young people need it in their lives.

You can help by becoming a mentor.

Another way to help is by making this brochure available to other adults. It is designed to help them better understand mentoring, to overcome any fears they may have had about it, and to help them explore all options for becoming a mentor.



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Thank you

...for your interest in mentoring. Millions of children in this country are eager to connect with adults who are willing to listen to them, stand by them, and help them develop to their fullest potential. One way you can help is to become a mentor. Mentoring is very effective in helping children of all circumstances to stay in school, avoid dangerous behaviors, and navigate the bumpy road to adulthood.

We hope the information that follows will help you take the next step toward connecting with a young person. Good luck, and thank you for your interest in mentoring!

What is a Mentor, anyway?

A Mentor IS:

- ✓ a trusted friend
- ✓ a guide
- ✓ a good listener
- ✓ a responsive adult
- ✓ A reliable adult

A Mentor IS NOT:

- ✗ a savior
- ✗ a foster parent
- ✗ a therapist
- ✗ a parole officer
- ✗ a cool peer

Here's how to get started



Think about how you would like to work with a young person. Consider —

- ✓ the types of activities that might interest you...helping youth develop a specific skill, pursue an interest or learn about a subject, or just getting to know them and being their friend.
- ✓ the age and number of youth you want to work with...elementary, middle school, or high school age children; one youth or several — for example, mentoring a child one-on-one versus coaching a group of young people.
- ✓ the amount of time you have...once a week? Once or twice a month?

It's important to be realistic about the responsibilities involved with mentoring a young person. If you're not sure about committing for at least six months, consider trying a shorter term volunteer opportunity.

Keep in mind, however, what one mentor told us:

“You don’t know in advance how rewarding it’s going to be, so you’re worried about the responsibility of giving your time consistently. The irony is that once I started doing it, I didn’t want to miss a session.”



Think about organizations in your community that might have mentoring opportunities that match your interests.

Personal contacts:

- ✓ Ask family and friends who volunteer.
- ✓ Ask someone who handles community affairs or charitable contributions at your office.
- ✓ Ask your minister, rabbi, priest, or someone who handles community outreach where you worship.
- ✓ Ask organizers and other members of service clubs, civic groups, fraternities, sororities, or professional associations you belong to.

Volunteer Center:

- ✓ Almost every community has a Volunteer Center. Call and ask which organizations provide mentoring opportunities.

Youth service organizations:

- ✓ Big Brothers and Big Sisters
- ✓ Boys Clubs and Girls, Inc.
- ✓ Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts
- ✓ Cities in Schools
- ✓ Foster Grandparents
- ✓ Junior Achievement
- ✓ YWCA/YMCA
- ✓ 4-H

Other organizations that serve children:

- ✓ School systems
- ✓ Community recreation centers
- ✓ Juvenile justice offices
- ✓ Community shelters



Call at least three organizations.

Investigate your options and choose the program that best fits your needs.

- ✓ Ask to speak with the organization's mentor coordinator.
- ✓ Tell the coordinator you are thinking about mentoring a young person — or a group

of

young people — and would like to know if their organization offers mentoring opportunities for adults.

- ✓ Describe the amount of time you have, the types of activities you are interested in,

and

the number of children you would like to work with.

- ✓ Ask the coordinator about training and support for volunteers and about the

application

and screening process. The application process will probably include a written application, personal and professional references, a background check, and a

personal

interview.



Be persistent!

- ✓ It may take awhile to be matched with a child. Application, screening, and training

can

take from one to six months to complete. Mentoring programs are concerned with

the

well-being and safety of children and volunteers, and their selection and matching procedures reflect that concern.

- ✓ Please don't get discouraged if a program does not match your needs. Ask if they

can

refer you to another organization. Becoming a mentor isn't always easy, but the rewards are well worth the effort, so hang in there and keep trying!

Good luck and thank you!